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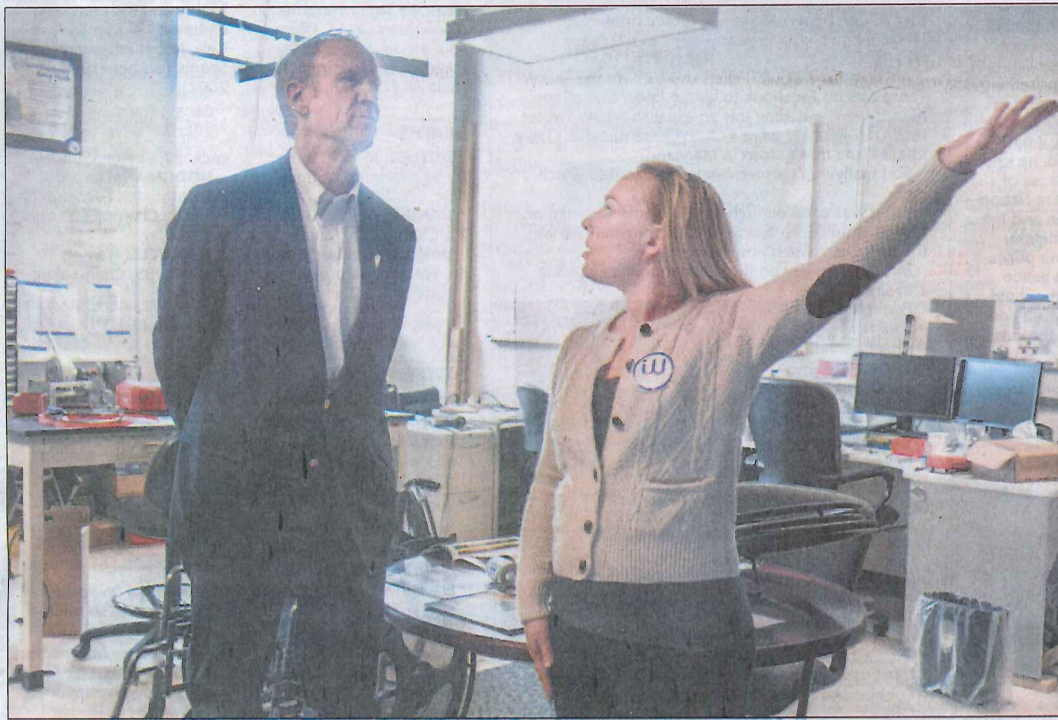
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Holly Hart/The News-Gazette

Marisa Siero, co-founder and vice president of sales for IntelliWheels Inc. shows Gov. Bruce Rauner some sample wheelchair wheels her company is working on. Rauner was visiting Enterprise Works at the University of Illinois Research Park for the launch of Uber, an app-based ride-sharing system, in six new cities in Illinois, including the Champaign-Urbana area.

RAUNER VISITS UI

Budget talk nears

Governor repeats general themes ahead of address on Wednesday



On NewsTalk 1400 WDWS-AM: Listen to Gov. Rauner's budget address at noon Wednesday.

By TOM KACICH
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CHAMPAIGN — Bruce Rauner had little to say during his visit here about Wednesday's budget address, which is expected to include more cuts and revenue increases as the new governor struggles with a financial ledger several billion dollars out of balance.

"We're going to lay out a plan that is balanced, fair, reasonable, affordable and lives within our means, which we haven't had that in Illinois in a long time," Rauner said Sunday.

He said he had not closely examined the recommendations of the Chicago-based

Civic Federation, which last week suggested "spending controls" that include higher health insurance contributions from state employees, and also a number of potentially controversial revenue increases, including another income tax increase; elimination of Illinois' income tax exemption on retirement income aside from Social Security and all taxable income of less than \$50,000; a broader sales tax on services; and elimination of the sales tax exemption on food and drugs until 2020.

Please see BUDGET, A-10

Uber launches service in Champaign-Urbana

By TOM KACICH
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CHAMPAIGN — The Uber ride-sharing service opened in Champaign-Urbana on Sunday — as well as in Bloomington-Normal, Rockford and Aurora — and Gov. Bruce Rauner came to town to welcome it.

"I look forward to doing everything I can as governor to make sure that Illinois is welcoming to your company and innovative high-tech companies like yours from all over America," Rauner told Uber's Illinois general manager, Chris Taylor, in a ceremony at Enterprise Works in the University of Illinois Research Park. "I

want this business park, I want the community and the tech sector booming in Champaign-Urbana the next four years.

"You're already doing good here. We can do outstandingly well, and we can really grow the economy for Illinois."

Taylor said the service, which went live Sunday afternoon in C-U, Bloomington-Normal, Rockford and Aurora and now has about 200 drivers in the six Illinois cities, expects to grow rapidly.

Three weeks ago, it opened in Springfield with about 50 drivers, he said. It now has about 150 there.

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UBER

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In order to use the service, Taylor said, customers have to download the Uber software application, sign in with a credit card, and press a request button for a ride.

"It's cashless, you don't

have to fumble with cash and that makes it safer, too," he said.

Uber began in 2009 in San Francisco, and with Sunday's announcement is now in more than 280 cities worldwide, Taylor said.

"Our presence in any community brings along benefits for the residents, such as the ability to get rides in the neighborhoods

that are underserved by traditional transportation options," he said. "There are flexible earning opportunities with high incomes for drivers, and most importantly a reduction in DUI arrests and accidents when people have a convenient, affordable and safe way to get around, besides getting behind the wheel themselves.

"These cities need and want Uber. In fact, in Urbana-Champaign just last week, over 8,000 unique people opened up the app to see if they could grab an Uber to their next destination."

The majority of Uber drivers, he said, drive "just a few hours a week to make a little bit of extra money to save up for a vacation,

to pay for their families to put food on the table or pay back their student loans."

He said Uber drivers are subject to background checks that go back seven years.

"All I would say to potential rides out there is that we are bringing new tech and new innovation to make sure that our rides are as safe as possible,"

Taylor said.

Laura Frerichs, director of the research park, said

Uber is "evidence of how technology can be a game-changer in our everyday lives, from smartphones to the sharing economy to business-friendly policies that enable disruptive technologies like this one to change the way we do things."